DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 574 JC 870 140

AUTHOR Rendon, Laura I.
TITLE The Demographic Imperative: Responding to New Students in Postsecondary Education.
PUB DATE Sep 86
NOTE 18p.; Keynote presentation at "Affirmative Action at the Crossroads: A Manifesto for Change," a Conference sponsored by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (San Jose, CA, September 26-27, 1986).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Change Agents; *College Role; Community Colleges; *Demography; Educational Change; *Educational Trends; Futures (of Society); *Immigrants; *Minority Groups; *Population Trends; School Responsibility; Social Values; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

To appropriately plan for the year 2000, three major issues must be addressed to reduce the gap between what postsecondary institutions currently have to offer and what the student population will require at that time. First, anticipated increases in the numbers of minority and immigrant students call for action to strengthen efforts to achieve full equity and access by addressing problems such as low retention and transfer rates. Second, these demographic changes require community colleges and senior institutions to address staff, curricular, and related educational policy issues to ensure that there are faculty role models for ethnic minorities, to increase the numbers of minorities in leadership positions, and to improve the quality of minority students' experiences at the college. Finally, postsecondary institutions must guard against a social vision that views new immigrants as "problem groups" and work instead as agents of society to create a responsible and informed citizenry. Racial and ethnic diversity are becoming more and more an integral part of American society, and colleges should do their best to promote dignity and respect for all people, to cultivate thought at both an intellectual and emotional level, and to prepare future leaders. (AYC)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED281574

# THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE: RESPONDING TO NEW STUDENTS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Laura I. Rendon
Visiting Assistant Professor of Higher Education
The University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208

Keynote Presentation at Conference
Affirmative Action at the Crossroads: A Manifesto for Change

Sponsored by
Board of Governors
California Community Colleges
San Jose City College

September 26 - 27, 1986

JC 870 140

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
L.I. RENDON
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

# THE DEMOGRAPHIC IMPERATIVE: RESPONDING TO NEW STUDENTS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Laura I. Rendon, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor of Higher Education
University of South Carolina

Buenos Dias.

First, I want to thank the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges for graciously inviting me to address you this morning.

I am very pleased to be in California, and I find it a humbling experience to be on the same program with Dr. Kenneth Clark, who has devoted his exemplary professional career to addressing the kinds of human issues that we will be discussing throughout this important conference.

I was one of the "baby boomers" who started going to college in 1966. As an Hispanic woman, I was also a non-traditional student entering higher education for the first time through a community college in my hometown of Laredo, Texas. Today, in 1986, 20 years have gone by for me. What have I learned from my experiences in that 20 year span that I can possibly share with you as we prepare to meet the future of the year 2000?

In the 1960s the members of my generation listened to Bob Dylan's intuitive message: "The times they are a'changing." And indeed they were. Within a 20 year span we have become a highly productive, affluent and powerful society. The members of my generation have taken a central role in shaping the progress of our society. I am very proud of my generation. Back in the 60s older folks were asking, "My God, are these the people that will be taking over our country?" In those days, older folks were angered and disconcerted with our clashes with the "establishment," our demands for justice, peace, freedom and

equal opportunity and our demands for reform and curricular relevance in the nation's colleges and universities. But I remember that what fueled these demonstrations and demands was not irresponsibility; it was more a sense of concern, caring and a desire to make our nation and our world a better place to live.

Today, I am also deeply concerned about my generation. I am troubled because the characteristic essence of my generation: our quixotic vision and our commitment and compassion to contribute to the public good seem to be drifting away and being replaced by a consciousness which overvalues individualism and self-reliance. It is ironic that the same generation that so vigorously fought for equal rights, peace and human dignity, is now labeled the "me" generation -- arrogant, selfish, materialistic -- concerned more with individual success and less with the collective progress of humanity. I am deeply concerned because it is my generation which comprises the core of the new leadership that will educate, train and hire our future leaders and that plays a central role in the economic, social and political development of this country. It is also the members of my generation that have chosen to be faculty, counselors, administrators, researchers and policymakers in higher education who will take a key role in meeting a complex and most demanding challenge: responding to new students in higher education who are the outgrowth of a changing population profile presently taking place in our country. Today, we are confronted with a demographic imperative--one that recognizes a dramatic population shift (from white to primarily non-white) and that serves as a compelling basis for the re-direction and reform of community colleges and senior institutions. Today, I will discuss the key educational issues related to the demographic imperative. I will also set the framework

for a call for action, and provide a motivating rationale for the development of solutions and strategies that address diverse needs of new students.

## The Demographic Imperative

In the 1980s, the times are still a'changing. We know that immigration patterns and differential fertility rates due in large part to the youthfulness of Blacks and Hispanics will increase the numbers of ethnic minorities living, working and going to school in this country (Hodgkinson, 1985; Estrada, 1983). By 2020, it is expected that between 25.4 and 28.7 percent of the nation's population will be either Black or Hispanic (Richardson and Bender, 1986; Lee, Rotermund and Bertschman, 1985). Asian Americans currently represent 44 percent of all immigrants admitted to the U.S., and their growth potential for the next decade is very great (Hodgkinson, 1985). The children of these new peoples are destined to be the country's new Americans and the colleges' new students by the year 2000.

Already, we are beginning to see a changing composition of students on our college campuses. In California, 29.6 percent of college and university enrollments in 1984 were comprised of American Indian, Asian, Black and Hispanic students. In Arizona, the figure was 33.5 percent; and in Texas, 25.4 percent (Jaschik; July 23, 1986). And community colleges continue to be a primary access point for large and diverse numbers of ethnic minorities. In the fall of 1984, fully 54.3 percent of all Hispanic students enrolled in public and private institutions of higher education were found in two-year colleges. For Asians the figure was 43.2 percent; for Blacks, 42.7 percent; and for American Indians, 54.7 percent.

Table I

Fall 1984 Ethnic Enrollments by Institutional Type

| Public and Private Institutions | Indian | Asian | Black | Hispanic | White | Foreign |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Four year | 45.3 | 56.8 | 57.3 | 45.7 | 64.1 | 84.3 |
| Two year | 54.7 | 43.2 | 42.7 | 54.3 | 35.9 | 15.7 |

Note: Adapted from The Chronicle of Higher Education, July 23, 1986.

According to a recent report of the Education Commission of the States (1986), there is "an overall mismatch between the educational needs of the nation and current practice in undergraduate education." To appropriately plan for the year 2000, we need to examine three major issues which must be addressed if we are to reduce the gap between what postsecondary institutions currently have to offer and what new students will require.

ISSUE 1: The demographic imperative calls for action to strengthen efforts to achieve full equity and access.

Ethnic minorities continue to be underrepresented in postsecondary institutions and in some cases, appear to be losing, not gaining ground. For example, although Hispanic college enrollment was up by 12.1 percent in the fall of 1984 (Jaschik, 1986), their college enrollment proportions in the Southwest, where they are most heavily concentrated, were roughly one-half that of their proportions in the total population. Between 1970 and 1980, Hispanic student representation in Southwestern colleges actually experienced a small decrease (Payan, Peterson & Castille, 1984). Similary, between 1980 and 1984, Black college enrollment was down 3.3 percent, and American Indians were down 1.2 percent (Jaschik, 1986).

Retention rates for ethnic minorities, particularly in community colleges, remain less than satisfactory. A major problem is low student transfer rates from two-to four-year colleges. Nationally, it is estimated that up to 74 percent of all entering community college students indicate they wish to transfer (Richardson & Bender,1986). However, only 5 to 25 percent actually do transfer (Richardson & Bender, 1984; Bensimon & Riley, 1984; Astin, 1982). In the fall of 1985, fully 67.7 percent of all full-time students enrolled in California community colleges had goals related to transfer (California Community Colleges, 1985). However, it has been noted that California community colleges experiencing the largest transfer losses tended to be those with a very high proportion of Black or Chicano freshman students (California State Postsecondary Education Commission, 1985; Hayward, 1985).

The factors associated with poor ethnic minority student representation, retention and transfer are numerous and varied. Blacks and Hispanics have lower high school graduation rates than whites and are less likely to attend college. Other factors include: poverty, unemployment, poor quality of education at inner city schools, the absence of role models, student lack of commitment to educational goals, lack of student preparation in reading, writing and math, and lack of articulation mechanisms between two- and four year colleges (Rendon, 1982; Nora, 1985; Wilson & Melendez, 1985).

There are those who question the importance of transfer and college attendance for students. Some maintain that not everyone needs a college degree and that this country does not have enough jobs to accommodate increased numbers of bachelor's degree recipients. While there is some truth and merit to this position, a larger set of issues exist that far outweigh this argument, particularly for ethnic minorities. First, the share of college degrees earned

by Blacks and Hispanics is abysmally low. In 1980, Blacks earned only 6.5 percent of the bachelor's degrees and Hispanics earned only 2.3 percent of the bachelor's degrees. Second, low minority education attainment levels have resulted in a large income gap between whites and non-whites. In a landmark study of wealth in America released by the Census Bureau this July, the median net worth of white households was $39,135. This was roughly 12 times that of Blacks, whose net income was $3,397 and eight times that of Hispanics, whose net income was $4,913. The median net worth of households headed by college graduates was $60,417; for high school graduates $31,892; and for those with less than 12 years of education, $23,447. The lesson learned is that higher education is a great investment ("Steps to Wealth... Money, September, 1986). The third reason that ethnic minorities are concerned about increasing the numbers of students who transfer and earn college degrees is quite simple. A college degree can mean the difference between rich or poor, between elite and commonplace, between leader and follower, between dignity and despair. Action is needed to devise interventions and strategies to encourage and attract minority students to colleges, to improve student retention rates, and to facilitate transfer from community colleges to senior institutions.

ISSUE 2:The demographic imperative calls for action for community colleges and senior institutions to address staff, curricular and related educational policy issues.

Postsecondary institutions, especially community colleges, will be dealing more and more with students who feel disconnected with the mainstream American society and with the higher education system as a whole. The new students coming to the nation's college campuses in the year 2000, I suspect, will not be very much unlike students who, like me, started going to college in the 1960s. Unfamiliar with what it takes to succeed in our society, ignorant and somewhat fearful of the higher education system, disconnected students will come to college asking quiet, ...ese questions much like those who feel alone in America: "Where do I fit in?" "Who cares about me?" "Who is there to touch and talk to?" (Bernikow, 1986). Black students have been able to fulfill this yearning for a sense of community in Black colleges, where peers and role models provide a strong support system.

But there is a terrible shortage of faculty role models for ethnic minorities in the nation's community colleges and universities. In 1983, Blacks made up 4 percent of the nation's faculty members, down from 4.3 percent in 1977. Hispanics accounted for 1.8 percent and Asians 3.5 percent. The faculty shortage crisis is coming at a time when one-third or more of the professoriate will have to be replaced by the end of the century (Heller, September 10, 1986). To further illustrate, out of 15,631 contract and regular faculty employed during the 1985 fall term in California community colleges, .6 percent were American Indian/Alaskan, 3.3 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, 5 percent were Black, 8.4 percent were Hispanic, and.4 percent were Filipino. Conversely, 85.3 percent of the faculty were white (California Community

Colleges, 1986). The scarcity of minority faculty, even in community colleges where they clearly are most needed, attests to the need for intensified efforts to strengthen affirmative action hiring practices.

At another level of staffing needs, we need to increase the numbers of ethnic minorities in leadership positions. To illustrate this critical need, one only needs to look at who is running most of the nation's community colleges and universities. For example, in the summer of 1985, there were only six Hispanic four-year college presidents and 20 Hispanic two-year college presidents (Olivas, 1985). Clearly, it will no longer suffice to hire minorities primarily to fill positions such as Director of Affirmative Action, Director of Minority Affairs, or Bilingual Education Coordinator. These are worthy careers, but ethnic minorities have the will, capacity and expertise to do much more. We need strong affirmative action efforts to hire more minority college presidents, vice-presidents, and faculty, and we also need to include minorities in important policymaking positions. If action is not taken to reverse the present unacceptable and deplorable circumstances, ethnic minorities will remain at the periphery of power and decision making, even when they are in localities where their increased numbers make them a majority and even when they are in collegiate forms with differential numbers of minority students.

Programs and strategies will also need to be developed to effectively help students learn and stay in college to achieve their educational goals. It is currently the vogue to speak of excellence and quality, assessment, testing and evaluation, and raising standards. People of color feel uneasy with these catchwords, not because we disagree with the basic concept that underlies them, but because these terms in the past have been misused and abused to the detriment of ethnic minority students. For example, the nation's testing

companies have cautioned college admissions officers not to use standardized test scores as the sole criterion to determine college entrance, but in many instances this pernicious practice continues.

What are the alternatives? I believe we need to speak of testing and evaluation as a comprehensive mechansim, such as presented in the Involvement in Learning (1984) report, which argues for "the widest possible range of techniques: essays, interviews, portfolios and performance examinations, as well as the traditional standardized tests" (p. 55). We need to speak of excellence as a function of how well an institution responds to students; how well it contributes to the overall development of students from entrance to graduation, and how well an institution adapts to changing student clienteles and their corresponding needs. In short, we need to judge quality not simply by who comes into the institution, but by what takes place within the institution.

ISSUE 3: The demographic imperative calls for postsecondary institutions to guard against institutional deviancy and work as agents of society to create a responsible and informed citizenry.

The nation's population growth phenomenon may be viewed in different ways. Some view added life in America as a curse -- a time bomb that will surely fragment the legal, cultural, economic and social fabric of the country. For example, the recent book, The Immigration Time Bomb: The Fragmenting of America (1986) is based on the notion that if we truly love America we must protect and preserve its culture, language and national identity. New immigrants, who are mainly Latin American and Asian, are viewed as "problem groups" who resist assimilation, insist upon bilingual education and bring conflict to our traditional educational, political and economic infrastructures (Madrid, 1986). In my view, this is a deviant definition of a problem which places the blame for society's ills primarily on people and not on inadequacies inherent in our social, economic and political system. This deviant mindset tends to breed a culture of separatism based on fear that new immigrants will eventually take over the country or that they will contribute to the erosion of the American social and economic fabric and intensify the problems of our educational institutions.

There is a real danger that this deviant social vision may be passed on to institutions of higher education as they prepare to serve new students. Institutional deviancy (Galarza, 1970) may be seen when community colleges and universities begin to think more in terms of devices which perpetuate them as institutions rather than those which serve the interests of their students. Institutional deviancy may be seen when students alone are seen as the root of a college's problems. And institutional deviancy may be seen when the raising of

standards is legitimized without equal or more concern for a corresponding improvement of curricular, staffing and programmatic services for new students that do not "fit" well into the present academic system.

There are also disturbing social and economic consequences to buying the premises of a deviant vision. As we look towards the year 2000, let us understand that we have a moral urgency before us. Community colleges and senior institutions must do their best to respond to disconnected students who tend to disappear from our college campuses into the culture of America no one likes to see or talk about. They disappear into the poverty and crime stricken barrios and ghettos, where they live huddled with the rest of disconnected America -- with the poor, the hungry, the powerless, the drug addicts, the alcoholics, the illiterate. The reform of education to make room for disconnected students is costly. But the social and economic costs of letting disconnected students leave our educational system feeling like failures are even far more costly. Make no mistake about it. We will see many of our educational failures again on the welfare lines, in our overcrowded jails, and in our drug and alcoholic halfway houses.

An uneducated society of new Americans also has profound implications for our economy. By the year 2020, I will be 72 years old. I, and the rest of the baby boomers will be retired, and our retirement income will be provided by younger, and much smaller age groups that will follow. However, by 1992, only three workers will provide the funds for each retiree and one of the three workers will be minority (Hodgkinson, 1985). Clearly, America cannot afford to have a workforce that is impoverished and poorly educated.

As we move toward the year 2000, there will be a tension between what higher education has been, what it is now, and how it should be. These tensions

drive some fundamental questions. What are we, community colleges and universities all about? What is our responsibility to our constituencies and to the larger society? What should we teach? Whom should we educate? To frame responses to these philosophical issues, I believe we need to operate with a collective vision -- one that recognizes that postsecondary institutions are agents of society and that one of their primary missions is to facilitate the development of an informed and responsible citizenry. The education of new students must be accomplished with a spirit of connection, with the understanding that what we do to enrich the disadvantaged will embellish the whole of our society.

## Conclusion

The issues I have raised are complex, politically and emotionally charged and there are no simple solutions. Earlier, I spoke of my generation and how I was concerned that as the nation's new leaders, we needed to re-kindle the energy and commitment with which we operated in the 1960s and early 1970s. I believe my generation and a large part of our society have fallen victim to the call for individualism. In the book, Habits of the Heart, (1985), it is explained that French social philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville warned that some aspects or "habits" of our character, including individualism, might eventually isolate Americans from one another and jeopardize conditions of our freedom. If I were to pick one habit that has diminished my generation, it is an eroded sense of compassion. Our drive to prosper, our present concern with providing only the bare essentials for the disadvantaged and our emphasis on self-reliance are sorely lacking in generosity, humaneness and sympathy.

Yet, there is hope. I am encouraged by isolated, but significant events that demonstrate that compassion and caring are still alive. For example, I was

heartened by our response to the starving people in Ethiopia, to the hungry in America, to the oppressed in South Africa, to the victims of the AIDS crisis. What will be our response to the new students in the year 2000? Will we do our best to welcome the students or will we merely tolerate them? I would hope that the framework for our response be based on a collective consciousness of compassion, of understanding that we are inextricably linked to the nature of the American society, which is in turn linked to the world.

Something very special is happening to America. The cast of America is changing and racial and ethnic diversity are becoming more and more an integral part of our society. It is an electric time; it is a time of great challenge; it is a time for action; and it is time for a new vision to guide our actions as we approach the year 2000. Let us use the culture of our colleges to bring dignity and respect for all people, to cultivate thought at both an intellectual and emotional level, to prepare future leaders to not only read, write, compute and think, but to be able to find a common ground with all of humanity. The scenario in the year 2000 can be either a richer or a poorer America. I believe we can be richer. And I believe that this new challenge before us is a blessing -- for it is giving us the opportunity to reflect on where we have been, where we are going and where we should go. Higher education and the members of my generation are an integral part of this crucial challenge. And the best that my generation can accomplish, indeed the best that community colleges and senior institutions can do for all students, is yet to come.

## References


Astin, A.W. (1982). Minorities in American higher education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc

Beal, P.E. (1979). Student retentino: A case study of an action approach. NASPA Journal, 17, 9-16.

Bellah, R.N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W.M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S.M. (1985) Habits of the heart. (1985). New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Bensimon, E.M. & Riley, J.J. (1984). Student predisposition to transfer: A report of preliminary findings. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Community Colleges.

Bernikow, L. (1986). Alone in America. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

California Community Colleges (1985). Report on staffing and salaries. Fall 1985. Chancellor's office, Research and Analysis Unit.

California State Postsecondary Education Commission (1985). Update of community college transfer student statistics, Fall 1984. Commission Report 85-21. Sacramento, California: CSPEC. (Eric Document No. ED 256 399).

Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education (1986). Sacramento, California.

Education Commission of the States (1986). Transforming the state role in undergraduate education: Time for a different view. Denver, Colorado: ECS.

Estrada L. (1983). The dynamic growth and dispersion of the Latin population. Paper presented at the AAHE Regional Forum, San Diego, CA.

Galarza, E. (1970). Institutional deviancy: The Mexican American experience. In Mexican American Mental Health Issues: Present Realities and Future Strategies: Boulder: Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1970.

Hodgkison, H.L. (1985) All one system. Demographics of education, kindergarten through graduate school. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Education Leadership, Inc.

Hayward G. (1985). preparation and participation of Hispanic and Black students: A special report. Sacramento, California: California Community Colleges, Office of the Chancellor. (Eric Document No. ED 254 285).

Heller, S. (September 30, 1986) Women flock to graduate school in record numbers but fewer Blacks are entering the academic pipeline. Chronicle of Higher Education, XXXIII, 2.

Jaschik, S. (July 23, 1986) States called key to college gains for minorities, The Chronicle of Higher Education, XXXIII, 21.

Lamm, R., Imhoff, G. & Dulton, E. P. (1986). The immigration time bomb: The fragmenting of America. New York.

Lee, J. B., Rotermund, M.K. & Bertschman, J.A. (1985). Student aid and minority enrollment in higher education. Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Lee, V. (1985). Access to higher education: The experience of Blacks, Hispanics and low socio-economic status whites. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Madrid, A. (1986) Book review of The immigration time bomb: The fragmenting of America in La Red/The Net, 97, Claremont: National Chicano council on Education.

Nora, A. (1985). Determinants of retention among Chicano college students: A structural model. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Houston.

Olivas, M. (1986). Latino college students. New York: Teachers College Press.

Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (1979). Student-faculty informal contact and college persistence: A further investigation. The Journal of Educational Research, 72, (41) 214-218.

Payan, R.M., Peterson, R.E. & Castille, N.A. (1984). Access to college for Mexican Americans in the Southwest: Replication after 10 years. College Board Report No. 84-3. new York: College Entrance Examination Board.

Rendon, L. I. (1982). Chicano students in South Texas community colleges: A study of student and institution-related determinants of educational outcomes. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Michigan.

Rendon, L. I. (1984). Involvement in learning: A view from the community college perspective. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education (ERIC No. ED 255 268).

Report to the Network. (May 1985). La Red/The Net, Claremont: National Chicano Council on Higher Education.

Richardson, R.C. Jr. & Bender, L.W. (1986). Students in urban settings: Achieving the baccalaureate degree. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education.

Steps to wealth: Learning money, earning saving and wedding (September, 1986). Money, XV, 9.

Study Group on The Conditions of Excellence in Higher Education (1984). Involvement in learning. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education.

Wilson, R. & Melendez, S. (1985). Minorities in higher education. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.



ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
JUN 19 1987